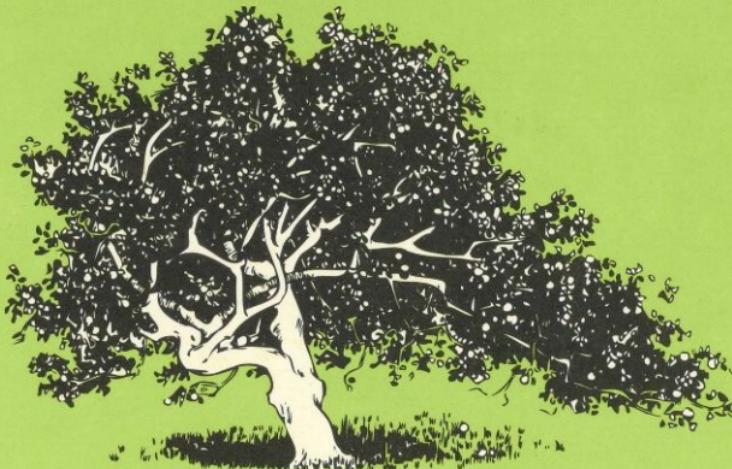


THE MIND'S EYE

A Liberal Arts Journal
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts



John M. C. Hess: A Tribute

The Simone de Beauvoir Connection:

The Influence of The Second Sex on the Anthropology of Women

By Diana J. Fox

Poetry by

Mary Kennan Herbert, Ben Jacques, Peter Filkins and Cynthia Richardson

Gardens, Tea, and Sympathy

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The Noble Savage in Chinese Film:

Ethnic and Gendered Dimensions

Review Essay by Sumi Colligan

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Editor's File

This edition begins with a tribute to John Hess articulated by Deb Foss, Steve Green and Mike Sabol, but expressive of sentiments shared widely by the college community. John's capacity as a leader is especially highlighted and in recent years, John's guidance was best exemplified by his efforts to build community support for replacing our general education requirements with a core curriculum. One of the most important objectives of such a curriculum is to break down arbitrary divisions between disciplinary knowledge and modes of inquiry, as well as to explore diverse approaches to common questions and themes.

One of the most striking features of the in-depth expository essay and two review essays that are included in this issue is that all three pieces establish links between diverse domains of knowledge and/or artistic expression. For example, in her exploration of Simone de Beauvoir's influence on feminist anthropology, Diana Fox documents the connections between an icon of feminist philosophy, scholarship on the anthropology of women and human-rights discourse and practice in a shifting academic and political context. Moreover, Sumi Colligan's review of Joan Chen's film *Xiu Xiu: The Sent-Down Girl* integrates anthropological theory with history and popular culture; whereas Meera Tamaya's book reviews bridge neuroscience research and detective fiction. Additionally, all three essays examine issues of consciousness and their individual, gender, class and/or national manifestations. To crumble unproductive walls even further, we have incorporated poetry from our very own Ben Jacques, along with contributions from Peter Filkins, Mary Herbert and Cynthia Richardson, all full- or part-time Berkshire residents. The article by Andrew Howitt provides an interesting analysis of how Europeans have misinterpreted Chinese gardens.

In keeping with John Hess's commitment to effective teaching and a public liberal arts mission, we encourage submissions that promote interdisciplinary analysis, as well as critical reflections on pedagogical approaches, philosophies and sources of inspiration. Furthermore, academic treatises alongside literary and artistic expressions challenge entrenched systems of thought and experience. Submissions for Fall 2000 are due by July 15th.

Sumi Colligan
Acting Managing Editor

John M. C. Hess: A Tribute

John Hess, professor of chemistry, died in December 1999. At the time of his death, he was serving the college as Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs. His nearly 36 years here were characterized by an enduring devotion to his students, his colleagues and the college. Three of his colleagues wrote the tribute to John Hess that follows.

We remember John Hess most particularly as a leader. He was incredibly effective in leading with a gentle hand. He had the wonderful gift of being able to lead without alienating. We never knew John to lose his temper, to swear or raise his voice in anger. His was a quieter approach. He got things done by listening, persuading and compromising. He made his points through patience, intelligence and logic. John used these attributes successfully as chair of the Chemistry Department, president of the Faculty Senate, chair of various governance committees, president of the Association of Faculty and Librarians (the faculty union) and, most recently, as Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs.

As president of the faculty association during the late 1980s, John led us through the single most difficult time in our collective memory.

Once it had become clear that maintaining the status quo in administrative leadership would not move the college forward, John as association leader used all of his skills in bringing the faculty and the librarians together to thoughtfully review the situation and discuss options. He worked hard to help his colleagues achieve consensus when a single unified course of action was not apparent. As a leader, he ensured that appropriate documentation was professionally prepared and presented in order to convince others that change was necessary. That this proceeded in such a deliberate, respectful and dignified fashion is testimony not only to John Hess's leadership skills but also to his commitment to preserving the dignity of everyone involved. He understood that to treat others with compassion, regardless of their views, was the only way for the college to continue moving forward. In the process, John mended fences and built bridges that united this college. Without his honesty and integrity, our ability to navigate through troubled times would have been far more difficult.

John Hess in all of his roles took time to mentor his colleagues and students. Greatly admired as a teacher, he brought wisdom, clear thinking and keen analytical ability to his class and laboratory instruction, committee work and collegial relationships. John identified himself not as a chemist but as a teacher of chemistry. His dedication and commitment to his students and colleagues contributed greatly to the long-term health and well-being of the college.

After more than 35 years of John's being inextricably woven into the fabric of North Adams State College/Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, his absence is acutely felt by all of us. His devotion to our college was surpassed only by that to his family, who supported him and shared in his successes. On a professional level, the absence of his knowledge and leadership creates a void that will be difficult to fill; on a personal level, the loss of his friendship, support, guidance and sensitivity is impossible to replace. In our hearts and minds, John was and will be the compass directing much of our evolving identity. His steadfast support and contributions have permanently altered the direction of the development of the college.

Perhaps John's professional life at the college was foretold by this caption, which appeared under his first faculty photograph, in the 1964 yearbook:

We give advice, but we cannot give the wisdom to profit by it.

John's legacy is his sound advice, embodied in his wisdom, which will help define this college for years to come. In that we have all profited from the life of John M. C. Hess.

Deborah Foss, *professor of psychology*
Stephen Green, *professor of sociology*
Michael Sabol, *professor of chemistry*

The Simone de Beauvoir Connection: *The Influence of The Second Sex on the Anthropology of Women*

BY DIANA J. FOX

If her functioning as a female is not enough to define woman, if we decline also to explain her through "the eternal feminine," and if nevertheless we admit, provisionally, that women do exist, then we must face the question: What is a woman?

—Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Introduction

One of the greatest ironies in the life of Simone de Beauvoir is that her most significant insight proclaiming that women are relegated to positions of alterity, or *otherness*, vis-à-vis men became her own fate as a serious scholar in France.¹ In 1949, she published her controversial book *The Second Sex*, an enormously courageous work for its time, in which she drew from literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, Marxism, anthropology and sociology to demonstrate how all aspects of social life and thought are dominated by the assumption of woman as Other. De Beauvoir wrote that woman "is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with

reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other" (xxii). "Society has always been male; political power has always been in the hands of men" and woman is "no fellow creature in man's eyes" (70). De Beauvoir also explained how women themselves internalize the condition of otherness, contributing both to their own devaluation and to the oppressive impact of society. *The Second Sex* is a treatise built around this singular idea of woman as Other and it reverberated forcefully throughout feminist circles.

The effect of Simone de Beauvoir's ideas on feminist scholarship occurred predominantly outside France, initially in England and the United States, as researchers harnessed the idea of the social construction of sex as a central analytical category in any study of society. In this sense, *The Second Sex* revolutionized intellectual discourse. Today, feminist thinkers regard this work as the bridge of ideas connecting First and Second Wave feminism (Humm 44).²

Simone de Beauvoir's influence was dwarfed in her own country by France's love affair with her lifelong companion, Jean-Paul Sartre, an overshadowing that, tragically, de Beauvoir herself condoned (Baire vii).³ Her work was so trivialized in France that even French feminists whom she inspired avoided identifying themselves as feminists or linking themselves with her for fear of ridicule. In the United States and Great Britain, where feminists have regarded her as an icon of the women's movement, many disciplines, including anthropology, continue to minimize her significant influence on early theorizing about gender (Baire vii). The neglect of de Beauvoir in anthropology in particular has to do with the lukewarm reception of feminist anthropology in general within the discipline. This began to change only in the mid-1990s, as anthropology departments actively sought feminist theorists and feminist anthropology courses appeared in catalogs. In France, French feminists have only recently begun to insist that de Beauvoir and her followers obtain a legitimate place in the evolution of the history of ideas.⁴ This article seeks to make a modest contribution to this wider effort by reintroducing anthropology to Simone de Beauvoir,⁵ as a pivotal figure in anthropological theory.

Our journey begins in the 1970s. We begin by identifying the links between *The Second Sex* and the emergence of a new subfield in departments of anthropology across the United States, the Anthropology of Women. We examine how de Beauvoir's ideas inspired and influenced the Anthropology of Women and how they were received more broadly

in the field of anthropology. We then explore why those same ideas fell into obscurity in the 1980s. Our journey ends in the present, demonstrating how de Beauvoir's universal claims again resurfaced in the late 1990s with a new slant informed by the research of the 1980s, particularly in the connection between feminist anthropology and women's human rights.

Anthropology of Women scholars were the first generation of anthropologists whose focus grew out of a "specific concern with the neglect of women in the discipline" (Moore 1). They openly asserted feminist goals as integral to their research agendas. Their objectives were fourfold: (1) to document male bias in earlier ethnographic accounts; (2) to collect data about the lives of women from women themselves, rather than rely on earlier data collected predominantly by male anthropologists from male informants; (3) to define an activist agenda to improve the conditions spawned by gender inequality; (4) and to develop a body of theory about the origins, diffusion and meaning of culture as it pertains to gender. Their most significant claim with both theoretical and activist implications was to argue that the subordination and secondary status of women is a "pan-cultural fact" (Ortner), and in spite of cross-cultural variability, sexual asymmetry is universal.

Since my argument explores how de Beauvoir's impact on anthropology has waxed, waned and waxed again over the course of three decades, it is crucial to explain why universal claims in general, and the claim that women everywhere are subordinate to men, reverberate so precariously within anthropology.⁶ For two reasons, anthropologists are typically skeptical of general statements about what all peoples do or think. First, the level at which generalities can be made often obfuscates significant and intricate details, which themselves reveal important differences about the nature of culture and its historical and contextual specificity. Second, anthropology's origins as a colonial discipline have contributed to the perpetuation of ethnocentric, racist and sexist biases of non-Western cultures—the traditional domain of anthropology. This occurred mainly through the creation of cultural evolutionary hierarchies, which sought to categorize all cultures according to a set of universally applied criteria. In a nutshell, universalist theories served to both create and sustain social stratification.

Anthropology's taboo of cultural universals arose initially in the United States as a progressive humanist rejection of 19th- and early-20th-century British anthropology's embrace of evolutionary theory. Cultural evolutionism was built on universal statements about the

connections between human biological traits, particularly "race," and cultural development. This framework incorporated all cultures along a single, evolutionary trajectory from savage (African, Australian Aborigine, Native American) to barbaric (Asian cultures and southern European) to civilized (western and northern European). Each stage represented both degrees of technological development and stages of moral progress, which the evolutionists claimed were intimately connected to technological advancement, perceived levels of language complexity and oversimplified assumptions about the relative complexity of thought associated with magical, polytheistic and monotheistic beliefs. Evolutionists such as Herbert Spencer, Henry Lewis Morgan and Edward Tylor each claimed that magical thought was associated with savagery and monotheism with civilization—polytheism being somewhere in between. The European colonizing mission sustained itself on such views, validating imperial domination as a sort of "gift" of civilization to the "natives."

Beginning in 1915 and continuing through much of the 20th century, American anthropology made a radical departure from this model and from the application of these principles to the European colonizing mission. Fueled by Franz Boas (the "Father of American Anthropology") and his students (Margaret Mead and Zora Neale Hurston, among others), the era of historical particularism emerged, focusing on the internal coherence of each culture and highlighting the racism inherent in cultural evolutionary theories. Cultural particularism also introduced the relativist notion that each culture should be evaluated on its own terms as each followed its own internal historical development. This idea was significant in delinking biological characteristics with cultural ones, debunking the idea that "biology is destiny" and setting anthropology on the progressive pathway toward identifying both sex and race as categories that are socially and culturally meaningful.

For example, 19th- and early-20th-century anthropologists had determined that marriage was a cultural universal. The evolutionists evaluated each documented form of marriage (various forms of polygamy, including polygyny and polyandry) as expressions of the moral development of the group practicing each form. Since cultural evolutionists viewed moral development as a reflection of the evolutionary stage of biological development, marriage practices themselves suggested a biologically determined moral order. In short, polygamy was relegated to morally depraved savages, while monogamy suggested an expression of a civilized ethos. Although some iota of moral consciousness could

be attributed to polygamous groups, since rules regulated sexual activity among prescribed partners, monogamous societies were deemed morally advanced by virtue of their evolutionary superiority. Boasian historical particularism and cultural relativism undermined these perverse views, through their rejection of universal constructs.

In the 1970s, when the Anthropology of Women scholars declared that women everywhere obtain second-class status by virtue of being women, that proposal clashed with the assumption that cultural particularism had become not only an anthropological norm but a cherished belief as well. Anthropologists responded with utmost caution to these early feminist tracts.⁷ Among these, Marxist anthropologists especially, including Eleanor Leacock and Karen Sacks, criticized the assumption of universal subordination (Moore 31), following Frederich Engels' view that women's second-class status came about with the development of private property. These researchers located women's subordination in certain societal forms and structures.

Another realm of criticism was directed at the theoretical frameworks employed by many of the Anthropology of Women scholars who relied, following de Beauvoir and Claude Levi-Strauss, on structural analyses that explained cultural phenomena through the structure of the human mind. Although the Anthropology of Women scholars drew on universal claims in order to liberate women, their analyses of women's secondary status as the symbolic products of panhuman thought processes set off warning signals and concurrently pricked anthropology's newly guilt-ridden conscience of its role in the colonial enterprise.

Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere responded to some of this criticism. They rejected Leacock's claim, for instance, that fully egalitarian societies have existed, saying:

Whereas some anthropologists argue that there are, or have been, truly egalitarian societies . . . and all agree that there are societies in which women have achieved considerable social recognition and power, none has observed a society in which women have publicly recognized power and authority surpassing that of men. Everywhere we find that women are excluded from certain crucial economic or political activities, that their roles as wives and mothers are associated with fewer powers and prerogatives than are the roles of men . . . all contemporary societies are to some extent male-dominated, and although the degree and expression of female subordination vary greatly, *sexual asymmetry is presently a universal fact of human social life* [emphasis mine]. (3)

Setting aside the critiques of these scholars for the moment, we now turn to an analysis of de Beauvoir's contributions to their scholarship.

The Anthropology of Women and Simone De Beauvoir

The publication of two works of collected essays, one in 1974—*Woman, Culture and Society*—and the other in 1975—*Toward an Anthropology of Women*—marked the formal initiation of Anthropology of Women as a subfield of anthropology. Acknowledging their debt to de Beauvoir in their introduction to the first collection, Rosaldo and Lamphere ask:

Why is Woman "The Other"? Are women universally the "second sex"? Like Simone de Beauvoir, who raised these questions in what must remain one of the most articulate and penetrating essays yet written on women's position in human societies, we ask them not simply out of some sort of abstract, intellectual curiosity, but because we are searching for ways to think about ourselves. (1)

The essays in both volumes share de Beauvoir's thesis that one is not born but, rather, becomes Other, marking the role that culture plays in producing sexual stratification. As activists, they also shared the view that research on women's lives across distinct cultures could be useful in advocating social change for American women. Rosaldo and Lamphere echo de Beauvoir's belief that women can achieve equality primarily through independent economic production, which has the power to transform the symbolic perception of women as Other (Evans). They proclaim:

Change must proceed in two directions. To begin, it would seem imperative to integrate men into the domestic sphere, giving them an opportunity to share in the socialization of children as well as the more mundane domestic tasks. What is more, the cross-cultural evidence of the importance of female participation in, and control of, the products of economic production indicates that women's status will be elevated only when they participate equally with men in the public world of work. (14)

As I will discuss below, this emphasis on economic liberation as the most important feature of change was not shared by all of the Anthropology of Women scholars. Their different theoretical underpinnings produced some rather varied explanations for the origins of women's

inequality and influenced their proposals for change. Still, two of de Beauvoir's ideas in particular emerge throughout the essays of Anthropology of Women scholars: (1) the universal association of women with nature and (2) the twin concepts of transcendence and immanence (Nielsen 203).

According to de Beauvoir, "The category of the *Other* is as primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality—that of the Self and the Other. . . . Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought" (xxii–xxiii). De Beauvoir elaborated on this Hegelian idea by developing the important insight, followed by the Anthropology of Women scholars, that the Self/Other distinction has a gendered dimension. The symbolic male association with Self is the result of "transcendence," or society's view that men can rise above the constraints of biology to participate in the world of culture, politics and economics. Permanence refers to society's perception that women remain in social roles tied to their reproductive capacities:

Woman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. It is often said that she thinks with her glands. Man superbly ignores the fact that his anatomy also includes glands, such as the testicles, and that they secrete hormones. He thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it. . . . Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being (xxi–xxii).

The contrast between transcendence and permanence emerges out of de Beauvoir's assumption of an a-priori opposition integral to Western thought: culture as opposed to nature. I elaborate on this idea in the following section, where we explore the ideas of two of the most influential Anthropology of Women scholars, Sherry Ortner and Michele Rosaldo, who incorporated these two fundamental tenets of Beauvoirian thought into their own studies.⁸

Simone de Beauvoir's Influence on Sherry Ortner

Sherry Ortner is perhaps the best known of the Anthropology of Women scholars outside the field of anthropology, and therefore I will

concentrate predominantly on her work. Ortner's early contribution was her attempt to document a symbolic, structural relationship between the status of men and women, which could explain women's subordination across history and cultures. In her influential article "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" Ortner argues that in all societies, symbolic configurations representing human thought patterns associate women with nature and men with culture. The idea that human patterns of thought are manifested in the symbolism of cultural texts was not new to Ortner or de Beauvoir. It is found in French structuralist thought, particularly in the work of Claude Levi-Strauss, whose ideas influenced de Beauvoir and Ortner. De Beauvoir knew Levi-Strauss, and in a footnote thanks him for furnishing her with proofs of his work, "which, among others, I have used liberally in Part II" (xxiii n.4). In her introduction to *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir quotes a passage from Levi-Strauss's "profound work" *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* (1949). Levi-Strauss argues that passage from the state of Nature to the state of Culture is marked by man's ability to

"view biological relations as a series of contrasts; duality, alternation, opposition, and symmetry, whether under definite or vague forms, constitute not so much phenomena to be explained as fundamental and immediately given data of social reality." (qtd. in de Beauvoir xxiii)

Here, Levi-Strauss contends that all societies create cultural meaning out of human biological facts such as age and sex differences. Thus, de Beauvoir's statement, mentioned above, that "in the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality—that of the self and the Other"—is a Levi-Straussian idea, with precursors, of course, in Western thought. It is worthwhile to look deeper into Levi-Strauss's ideas to understand better how de Beauvoir and later Ortner build their argument for the "woman-as-Other-in-nature" and "man-as-Self-in-culture" opposition.

Levi-Strauss sought societal constructs in the "deep structures" of the mind (which he never really clarified) and in allegorical motifs as they were manifested in mythology. He argued that mythology, particularly cosmological stories of creation, is a realm of cultural production expressing conflicts fundamental to the human condition. Human beings articulate the conflicts of existence in terms of binary oppositions reflecting human patterns of thought as revealed through the condition of mind. Examples of such conflicts include the sacred and the

profane; nature and culture; good and evil; the raw and the cooked; and, of course, male and female. In mythology, the journeys of a mythic hero, heroine or trickster inevitably result in contests of spectacular proportions. These contests dramatize the universal conflicts human beings face as members of social groups. Culture is the symbolic system of meaning, the adaptive mechanism through which solutions are sought to the challenges of survival and the intricacies of human relationships with each other and with other beings. The resolution of the contest, typically in favor of the hero/heroin, inscribes a set of actions that henceforth mediate between one horn of the opposition and the other. The process of cooking, for example, falls in the realm of social reality. As such, it is the symbolic (cultural) practice that transforms raw, natural and profane resources into cooked, cultural and sacred food. Since mythology is sacred, the resolutions to conflicts enshrine a moral order obtaining the weight of supernatural truth through ritual practice.

Building on Levi-Strauss's structuralist assumptions, first de Beauvoir, then Ortner argued that the cross-cultural association of males with culture and females with nature is an extension of the Self/Other dualism. The male Self is both valorized and normalized through his triumph over nature and association with culture, while the female Other, through the act of childbirth, is associated with nature and, through this association, devalued. Society "makes sense" of biological relations, beginning with birth, sacred naming ceremonies and other postpartum rites of passage, in which cultural practices mediate the opposition between male and female. A child, born of nature (read: woman) and lacking culture, becomes a human person through ritual acts of socialization. Marriage arrangements, too, as the social practices preceding birth, highlight the opposition between male and female as endemic to human society. De Beauvoir says, "Women . . . have never composed a separate group set up *on its own account* over against the male grouping"; instead, citing Levi-Strauss: "The reciprocal bond basic to marriage is not set up between men and women, but between men and men by means of women, who are only the principal occasion for it" (71). This is Levi-Strauss's famous "exchange of women" thesis wherein women are exchanged as symbols of nature to perpetuate culture by extending social ties through marriage. For de Beauvoir, marriage and birth rituals demonstrate how female and nature, and male and culture, become woven together through the fabric of myth in societies around the world, as universal, symbolic constructs. Human beings can maintain the moral order as long as they reproduce the actions

of mythical protagonists in their everyday behaviors to ensure society's continued existence. In so doing, people invest the opposition between male and female with renewed force and commitment, thereby maintaining sexual stratification. The ultimate risk of ignoring mythological precepts is the destruction of society itself.⁹

As with the other Anthropology of Women scholars, Ortner generated analytical explanations as the foundation for political programs for change. Since the nature of solutions reflects the manner in which problems are described, the type of change proposed by the scholars of the new subfield followed from their explanations of the existence of the universal inferiority of women. For Ortner, the location of this inferiority is in the symbolic constructions on which society is built. Therefore, change cannot come about merely by instituting social structural transformations. The problem, says Ortner, lies at the level of culture, "taken generically as a special sort of process in the world" (69). Subsequently, any kind of transformation will lie in the realm of consciousness, affecting entrenched beliefs in a feminine psyche (as de Beauvoir said, "thinking with her glands"), a state of mind that conditions women to accept their cultural depreciation through their association with nature. Change requires nothing less than a complete reconfiguration of symbols invested with new authority.

The notion of a female psyche flowing from biological constraints, which gives rise to and reinforces women's roles, reflects de Beauvoir's notion of "permanence." Today, attempts to explain women's social roles through biological and physiological processes are rightfully criticized as "essentialist" thinking—thinking that reduces the complexity of sociocultural processes to biological "givens." What distinguishes de Beauvoir and Ortner from essentialist claims is their shared understanding that the association of women with nature is symbolic, not literal. It is in the *nature of the symbols* themselves that the process of cultural change takes place, and through which human beings create the referents that produce meaning, in one particular direction and not in another.

Michele Rosaldo also employs the fundamental tenets of structuralism. She is similarly concerned with why women have become linked to nature and men to culture. How is it, in de Beauvoir's words, that man "superbly ignores the fact that his anatomy also includes glands"? Her response, as we will see below, revolves around the relations of production and the organization of work.

Simone de Beauvoir's Influence on Michele Rosaldo

In her chapter "Woman, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview," Rosaldo argues that everywhere women lack culturally valued authority. To explain this phenomenon, she proposes an analytical model that relates "recurrent aspects of psychology and cultural and social organization to an opposition between the 'domestic' orientation of women and the extra-domestic or 'public' ties that, in most societies, are primarily available to men" (17, 18). Rosaldo also insists on the universality of women's association with the domestic realm and men with the public realm, stating that "the complexities of particular cases do not undermine our global generalizations" (35). Drawing from more than ten ethnographic case studies that support this distinction, she states that the association of men with production and women with reproduction is the most important dichotomy that societies employ to distinguish between men and women. Unconvinced by Levi-Strauss's "deep structures" of mind, Rosaldo instead emphasizes the organization of work and the sexual division of labor as the driving forces behind sexual stratification.

Rosaldo identifies six consequences of this domestic/public split, but here I will focus on only one that is most closely linked to de Beauvoir's explanation of the distinction between immanence and transcendence. In marking this distinction, de Beauvoir states:

Man assures the repetition of Life while transcending Life through Existence; by this transcendence he creates values that deprive pure repetition [the permanence of domestic labor] of all value. . . . In setting himself up as sovereign, he is supported by the complicity of woman herself. (64)

One of the most significant consequences of man's transcendence and woman's immanence is the tendency of society to regard women as anomalies because of their biological functions and culturally devalued domestic roles. As anomalies, women are aberrations from what is clean and good; they are sources of ritual pollution and creators of disorder. Menstrual taboos, for instance, which restrict women from coming into contact with food or ritual items during menarche, exemplify the danger inherent in women.¹⁰ Mythology is frequently the most common realm for the expression of the dangers of the social destruction that ensues when women gain control over ritual paraphernalia. Many myths tell a similar story: "At the time of Creation, the women ruled, keeping the men in subjection and fear until they discovered the source of fe-

male power and decided to wrench it from them (Bamberger 271). The myths often explain that women have committed some egregious error by neglecting their sacred responsibilities, which enables men to discover the women's secrets. Once they do, the men obtain public authority and control over the sacred items. Rosaldo is certainly interested in these misogynist myths as venues to articulate the origins of the domestic/public split, and she concurs that mythology and the relationships therein are symbolic receptacles for sexual stratification. Still, she does not support the view that their symbolism reflects inherent thought patterns that are responsible for sexual stratification.

Although Rosaldo's argument is universalist, she is nonetheless careful to point out that not all economic production can be associated with men in the public sphere, since women's economic activities around the world are extremely varied. While some productive activities occur in the home, others take women outside the home: Reproductive and productive spheres overlap. While she does not attempt to explain the circumstances that permit women in some societies to participate in highly valued public production, her intimation that the public/private dichotomy may not be a universal pattern anticipated a more widespread rejection of the dichotomy, which predominates today. The rejection emerges from ethnographic evidence of the multiple, intersecting spheres of male and female life and a more general renunciation of binary oppositions as explanatory models.

The universal explanations of the 1970s gave way to a new focus in feminist studies in anthropology in the 1980s and the rejection of Beauvoirian influence. It is to this decade that we now turn.

Feminist Anthropology and the Break from Universalism

Feminist Anthropology became the new term for Anthropology of Women in the 1980s. British Feminist Anthropologist Henrietta Moore explains the difference between the two, stating, "This modern feminist anthropology takes as its subject, not women, but gender relations. It does not purport to speak for women, although it certainly speaks extensively about women" (186). Feminist anthropological inquiry of the 1980s was shaped both by an explicitly activist perspective and by the heightening awareness on the part of the white, middle-class feminists who inspired the Anthropology of Women scholarship that there was more than one feminism (188). It would be a mistake, however, to assume that feminist theory prior to the 1980s was homogeneous, since it consisted of a range of explanations and solutions to gender

stratification based on diverging political and economic orientations (liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, etc.). However, the feminisms of the 1980s were of a different sort.

In the 1980s, the voices of Native American feminists, African American womanists,¹¹ Third World feminists and lesbian feminists finally penetrated the dominant feminist discourse of white, heterosexual, middle-class feminism, in part because of increased criticism from these other circles of the narrowness of that discourse. A number of developments were taking place within the discipline that coincided with and supported the emergence of these new forms of feminism: Anthropology departments were hiring more women of color; the influence of anthropologists trained in Africa, Asia and Latin America on North American anthropologists increased; an "anthropology of the West" took form that lent a crucial eye to the values and beliefs undergirding anthropology itself, as a form of cultural practice; and global women's movements received greater prominence through United Nations-sponsored international conferences and publications. To its credit, Feminist Anthropology embraced these developments, asserting itself as a polyvocal forum for feminist theoretical advancements, connected to wider social and cultural transformations. Its proponents placed the subfield at the center of emerging ideas, rather than relegating it to the margins.

The theoretical focus of researchers rapidly departed both from the universalistic analysis of women's status as Other and from generalized statements about the existence of sexual asymmetry. Research shifted back to the cultural particularist perspective, but this time inspired both by multiple feminisms and by poststructuralist deconstruction theory. Dualisms came under attack as overly simplistic and ethnocentric as part of the general disdain for "master narratives," or "totalizing claims"—those theories that sought to explain the societal transformations through one particular model. Researchers collected evidence that binary oppositions are not universal features of human thought and that culture and nature are not oppositions reflecting truth, but are culturally shaped ideas rooted in Western thought about nature, extending back to classical antiquity. According to British philosopher Kate Soper:

The Ionian philosophers of the sixth and seventh centuries B.C. already presupposed a difference between natural or "self-occurring" things and the products of skill or artifice, while by the fifth century a nature-culture demarcation is at least implicitly at work in the distinction between *nomos* (that which is

a convention of culture or socially derived norms or law) and *physis* (that which is naturally determined). (37)¹²

These new feminist anthropologists oriented their research to test the idea that all cultures distinguished between nature and culture, male and female, domestic and public, production and reproduction. Rosaldo herself, along with Jane Collier, another Anthropology of Women scholar, returned both to the field and to ethnographic accounts of Australian Aborigines, American, Asian and African hunter-gatherers and hunter-horticulturists to conclude that

"Themes of motherhood and sexual reproduction are far less central to such people's conceptions of 'woman' than we had assumed. . . . We found that neither women nor men in very simple societies celebrate women as nurturers or women's unique capacity to give life. . . . Woman the Fertile, Woman the Mother and Source of All Life was, quite remarkably, absent from all available accounts." (qtd. in Moore 29)

Other evidence demonstrated how men in some societies through ritual both participate in reproduction and identify with the physiological functions of the female body. Couvade refers to "a husband's observance of food taboos, restriction of ordinary practices, and in some cases seclusion during his wife's delivery and postpartum period" (Moore 29). In some groups in New Guinea, for instance, men practice ritual blood-letting to associate themselves symbolically with menstruation, and they temporarily cease the practice when their wives are pregnant to symbolize male pregnancy (30). These examples demonstrate that universally valued symbolic bifurcations do not exist but, instead, are culture specific. Even in Western societies, the male/female dualism itself is challenged by the growing recognition of intersexed individuals,¹³ as well as by cultures with "third genders" (such as the Sioux Berdache or the Hijras of India) from which flow social roles neither fully feminine nor fully masculine.

We find the repudiation of these universal constructs in the work of two theorists who represent the cultural particularists' approach to understanding women's status and roles cross-culturally, Chandra T. Mohanty and Lila Abu-Lughod.

Mohanty is an Indian sociologist whose impact on Feminist Anthropology was particularly influential with the publication of her edited volume *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. She levies

a serious critique of Western feminism by warning against the generalizations wrought by an overzealous universalism that ignores the particular plights and—significantly—the accomplishments of the diversity of women living in Third World countries. Paradoxically, though, de Beauvoir's concept of woman as Other enters into Mohanty's analysis, though in this instance it is not men who see women as Other, but privileged Western white women who perform this othering (symbolic simplification) of non-Western women of color.

This process has produced what Mohanty calls the "average Third World woman." In her ubiquitous and oft-quoted statement, Mohanty claims that Western feminist texts have produced the Third World woman as a singular monolithic subject:

This average Third World woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being "third world" (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.). This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions. (56, 57)

Mohanty also notes that this process of othering is not restricted to Western, middle-class white women, but also occurs in the writings of middle-class urban African and Asian scholars who codify their own middle-class status as the norm, thereby relegating poor women of their own nationality as Other.

Mohanty argues for the creation of new Third World feminisms whose task would be the generation of context-specific perspectives of women's conditions. Such perspectives would work against this reductionist analysis by revealing that women are not merely victims, but actors with complex and variable experiences who resist, challenge and subvert the contradictions present in their everyday lives (72). Mohanty's validation of the significance of Third World feminisms prompted feminist anthropologists to amass ethnographic data on the subject, exploring the multiple avenues for feminist expression. Although Mohanty carefully claims to avoid the same pitfalls she condemns, stating that "Western feminism is by no means . . . a monolith" (52), she unfortunately falls into the trap of turning Western feminism into a narrow, homogeneous entity, as her analysis of the implicit self-identification of

Western women demonstrates. Even though she does not fully heed her own warning, Mohanty contributes to feminist anthropological understanding of the negative impacts of culturally assumed categories.

Feminist Anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod succeeds where Mohanty falls short. Her description of Bedouin women's poetry as a form of social critique and political consciousness underscores the role feminist ethnography can play in uncovering and dispelling the mutual misunderstandings that exist between Western feminists and Third World feminists. Commenting on the different approaches between Anthropology of Women scholars and Feminist Anthropology of the 1980s and early 1990s, Louise Lamphere notes that in 1974, when her edited volume *Woman, Culture and Society* was published, Bedouin women would simply have been thought of as "confined to the domestic sphere" (73). However, Bedouin women's poetry reveals richly textured lives, which do not fit neatly into a domestic/public dichotomy. Abu-Lughod demonstrates how this poetry constitutes a dissident and subversive discourse, which women recite publicly to express their feelings about divorce and husbands who take another wife or the conflicting sentiments over arranged marriages. Bedouin poetry reveals the depths of women's feelings, standing in contrast to conventional expectations of female modesty and shame. Abu-Lughod explains that ritual poetry is a response against a tradition with "an obsession with morality and an overzealous adherence to the ideology of honor. . . . Poetry reminds people of another way of being and encourages, as it reflects, another side of experience" (259). The use of such a highly valued cultural form to express taboo sentiments demonstrates that Bedouin women are active agents, analyzing and reinterpreting their society's mainstream values. They are not passive victims of patriarchy, immanently in a domestic, glandular realm.

As the deconstruction of "woman" as a viable category of analysis ensued throughout the 1980s, another trend simultaneously began to build momentum. The international women's rights movement further facilitated the cross-cultural communication among feminists around the world. Cross-cultural communication was already occurring, as noted, through the influence of Third World feminisms on Feminist Anthropology's critical assessment of the Anthropology of Women. Interactions occurred through scholarly writing and academic conferences, and through the everyday interactions between anthropologists and informants in the fieldwork process, as feminist anthropologists began to study women's movements through participant observation. The in-

ternational women's rights movement introduced additional modes of communication through United Nations-sponsored international women's rights conferences and the organizing that took place through these venues. The conferences also inspired follow-up activist organizing through partnerships between northern nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and southern NGOs and, increasingly, by the exchange of stories and strategies through the World Wide Web.

These multiple levels of cross-cultural communication continue to have important effects: (1) They validate the view that there are some important social structural commonalities that shape women's roles and statuses across cultures; (2) they make possible the building of bridges or "the construction of global feminism"—without presupposing its existence; and (3) they highlight those areas of difficult and sometimes impenetrable differences as subjects for discussion. Above all, these cross-cultural dialogues began a process through which feminists could begin to explore *the relationship* between similarities and differences, while keeping at the forefront the most important common goal of all: that women's rights must be regarded as human rights, not special rights (read: marginalized rights), whose status within international lawmaking, monitoring and enforcement arenas mirrors women's secondary status within particular societies. Women's human rights activists noted that human rights law reflects a "gender myopia . . . by conceptualizing human rights as 'men's rights,' thereby 'ghettoizing' those bodies responsible for women's rights" (O'Hare 364).

Feminist anthropologists in the late 1990s spoke of universal women's human rights as an important ideal to attain. The return to Beauvoirian macrolevel analysis is an important component of this effort to articulate links among local, regional and national social movements and to achieve the objective of an international human rights that is truly universal in its scope.

Women's Human Rights: A Different Kind of Universalism

This concluding section examines the role of Feminist Anthropology in the international women's human rights movement. This role is best explained as a break from the dominant, historical position toward international human rights that anthropology as a discipline has embraced from the time of Boas until the early 1990s. In 1947, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) rejected the universality of international human rights norms, positing that the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) enumerated rights and freedoms

that were culturally, ideologically and politically nonuniversal (Preis 288). The AAA argued that such rights and freedoms contained a Western, Judaeo-Christian bias, and therefore could not be regarded as universal and inalienable (Preis 288).

This criticism of the Declaration of Human Rights mirrored the perspectives of both ethical and cultural relativism promulgated by Franz Boas' anticolonial anthropology. The ethical relativist view went hand in hand with the cultural relativist effort to debunk cultural evolutionism and the sweeping moral condemnation it levied on peoples who were not of Western European descent. As we have seen in our own recent history with the uneven condemnation of regimes violating human rights from Cuba to China, Bosnia and Rwanda, the ideals of human rights are constrained by political motives.

However, partly because feminist anthropology is both an activist and a scholarly endeavor and partly because feminist anthropologists were faced with the inconsistencies of ethical relativism vis-à-vis feminism—a position that requires moral judgments—the subfield emerged as a leading anthropological voice in favor of universal human rights. Feminist anthropologists could not reject human rights ideals on the claim that they might not be implemented justly. Instead, they worked to make mainstream human rights programs sympathetic to women's concerns—concerns such as equality, violence against women and reproductive freedoms—and, in so doing, to promote international women's human rights.¹⁴ Feminist anthropologists in the 1990s challenged the ethical relativist view of detachment, on the grounds that they must make moral judgments about cultural processes that are not their own. They argue that "it is simply unacceptable to subject women to subordinate treatment that enslaves them to men" and that "human rights is about regulated civilized behavior and conduct toward all human beings" (Beyani 304). In other words, feminist anthropology has embraced the ideal and the challenge for the equitable, universalistic implementation of human rights.

In this sense, feminist anthropologists of the 1990s returned to Simone de Beauvoir's position that the freedom of women rests on their willingness to take seriously their moral commitment to the whole of human freedom. De Beauvoir wrote about the protection of freedom and the work of liberation as a "responsibility of existence," condemning those who choose to implement their values inconsistently as violating that responsibility. De Beauvoir concurred with Hegel's view that "the citizen acquires his ethical dignity in transcending himself toward

the universal" (613), but she abhorred the choice of "man," who, in his relations with "woman," asserts his "right to desire and pleasure," entering into a realm where his morality no longer applies. Prostitution, says de Beauvoir, is "the most flagrant example of this duplicity . . . for it is his demand [for pleasure] that creates the supply" (613). De Beauvoir's view is certainly not a relativist one; rather, it is a view that requires the universal responsibilities of the citizen to influence the choices we make in our individual lives. She provides the moral grounds on which it becomes impossible for feminist anthropologists to condemn their own society but not another if freedom is at stake. Actions in the name of freedom follow from the ontological view that all human beings share a moral status that requires consistency of practice for its realization. Although feminist anthropologists pursuing women's human rights issues do not explicitly connect themselves with de Beauvoir, she introduces a valuable theoretical framework for the new position of feminist anthropology with respect to rights and responsibilities.

At the same time that there is a return to universal concerns, feminist anthropologists face a significant challenge: They do not want to fall back into the trap of producing "monolithic subjects," as Mohanty points out, or to impose Western constructs on the interpretation of non-Western cultures. The question guiding feminist anthropological research today is how to support universal women's human rights while concurrently recognizing the diversity of cultures. Such a question carries weight outside of feminist concerns into the arena of culture and human rights in general, demanding that supporters of human rights pay attention both to cultural particulars and to the fundamentals of human dignity and freedom. In order to achieve this goal, the feminist anthropological position views human rights as both "a *defining* and defined set of universal values [emphasis mine]," whose power over human conduct depends on norms that are consistently recognized, implemented and regulated (Preis 310). As a defining set of values, universal human rights norms must continue to be created through cross-cultural dialogue, drawing from locally preexisting notions of human dignity and respect that all cultures contain. Even where human rights are being blatantly violated, the contradictory nature of culture as a process indicates that values of human freedom will exist somewhere in the indigenous philosophies of most cultures. Values of freedom and dignity coexist with practices that stratify, discriminate and oppress.

Rebecca Cook, a leading legal scholar in the women's human rights

movement, argues that women's dignity, freedoms and equality are clearly not universally practiced:

The nature and extent of violations of women's international human rights continue to be cruel and pervasive. In many countries, violations remain not simply unremedied, but unnoticed as discriminatory or as an affront to human dignity. This widespread failure to honor international obligations poses a challenge to the credibility, universality, and justice of international human rights law. (31)

Given the ubiquity of the violations, it is crucial to explore what steps are necessary to ensure that women's human rights "become a part of the legal culture of a given society," such that they strike responsive chords in the general public consciousness (Coomaraswamy 39). This is a goal that should be attractive to feminist anthropologists. Their research methods of fieldwork and participant observation are especially well suited to taking on the challenge of carrying "women's voices, interests, and concerns into the mainstream human rights lawmaking arena" (Charlesworth 63), so that the diversity of women's experiences in different cultures is introduced into international human rights law (Cook 10). In this way, human rights norms can be viewed as part of an emerging global culture that includes multiple cultural traditions of human freedom. It should be noted, therefore, that universalism does not imply cultural uniformity.

By insisting on the value of cross-cultural dialogues as necessary impediments to the abuse of power and its distortionary effects on the production of knowledge, feminist anthropology can continue in the Boasian tradition while simultaneously exploring the relationship between the particular and the universal. Simone de Beauvoir has played a crucial role in launching this process by directing our attention to the liberatory potential contained in ideas of human freedom with universal scope.

She also insisted on another important insight that should accompany our increasing emphasis on legal human rights. She realized that rights alone cannot emancipate women. In her chapter "The Independent Woman," de Beauvoir acknowledges the significance of the *de facto*, everyday world in which women's circumstances are played out. She says, remarking on the legal transformations of her time:

According to French law, obedience is no longer included among the duties of a wife, and each woman citizen has the

right to vote; but these civil liberties remain theoretical as long as they are unaccompanied by economic freedom. A woman supported by a man—wife or courtesan—is not emancipated from the male because she has a ballot in her hand; if custom imposes less constraint upon her than formerly, the negative freedom implied has not profoundly modified her situation; she remains bound in her condition of vassalage. (699)

I would agree with de Beauvoir that economic freedoms are fundamental; yet rights should not be minimized as trivial contributions to women's fundamental humanity. It is imperative to explore how law and cultural norms mutually affect one another. For de Beauvoir the combination of rights and economic liberty arrived at through transformation of custom presents one important path toward freedom for women. These changes must also be accompanied by the recognition that "sameness" and "equality" are not parallel ideas, and that there is such a thing as "equality in difference" (731). In other words, when de Beauvoir stated that "the fact of being a woman today poses peculiar problems for an independent human individual" (682), she not only asserted the humanity of the Other but also understood that change toward equality must reflect certain differences between men and women. Women's human rights law concurs with this view through its formal institutionalization of the humanity of women. When international law inscribes protections for women from harmful situations that are particular to women, in an effort to uphold their human rights, then it reflects equality in difference.

This recognition in international law emerged through significant struggle on the part of protagonists of the women's human rights movement, including efforts of feminist critiques. Part of this criticism includes discriminatory ideas that have shaped the construction of the law. This includes the binary opposition between the public and the private (or domestic) realms. Feminist legal scholar Ursula O'Hare points out that the historical exclusion of women's voices from defining the content of human rights discourse has, in turn, meant that human rights have evolved along a gendered "fault line" that distinguishes between public and private spheres for the purpose of legal regulation (368). This fault line has betrayed women's interests most starkly in protecting them against physical, sexual and psychological violence—torture within the home. According to O'Hare, "The public/private dichotomy has shaped the human rights edifice . . . in the theory of state responsibility for human rights abuses" (368).

Since human rights law has been concerned with restricting the exercise of public power, it is the state that has been held responsible for human rights abuses. Those abuses occurring in the so-called private sphere by so-called private actors have only recently received attention by the state. Hilary Charlesworth has argued in "Worlds Apart: Public/Private Distinctions in International Law," that maintaining the public/private dichotomy serves "to muffle and often completely silence the voices of women" (qtd. in O'Hare 371). Moreover, the boundaries between public and private are, in fact, as the feminist anthropologists of the 1980s noted, artificial distinctions that obscure the fluidity of boundaries between public and domestic life. Catherine Mackinnon remarks that upholding concrete distinctions reinforces the idea that the state is all there is to power and, in so doing, "produces an exceptionally inadequate definition for human rights when so much of the second-class status of women . . . is done by men to women prior to express state involvement" (qtd. in O'Hare 369).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, a number of steps were taken at the international level to define violence against women as a human rights abuse. General Recommendation No. 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, or "The Women's Convention") states that violence against women "seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men" and reminds states that implementing their obligations under CEDAW requires them "to take positive measures to eliminate all forms of violence against women (O'Hare 372). Most recently, two international instruments dramatically reframed the boundaries of human rights law. In 1993, The European Declaration of Strategies for the Elimination of Violence Against Women in Society and, in 1995, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women both reflect the understanding that "gender-based violence [is] not the sporadic acts of a few men, but symptomatic of the structural inequality in society . . . advancing understanding within the global community of the systematic nature of violence against women" (O'Hare 374). Both instruments aim to protect women against acts of violence occurring at three levels: the family, the community and the state (375). In so doing, we are witness to a rejection of a certain form of universal thinking—those models based on binary oppositions that seek to explain all societies, and even regulate behavior by law, through an ethnocentrically derived model, masquerading as a universal model. This is being

replaced, through feminist pressure, with a new form of universal thinking, which contends that ideas that are truly universal in scope are those that are consciously created (and absorbed) through attention to general patterns as well as local ones. Anthropologists are more likely to accept these types of universal claims as valid, since they do not attempt to describe patterns of behavior or thought on such a broad level that the common features render the details as essentially bereft of significant meaning.

By elevating violence against women to a human rights abuse, the international women's human rights movement has responded positively to pressure from feminists by undermining the public/private dichotomy as a reflection of the truth of sociocultural life. Most important, the status of women in international law—and therefore globally—has shifted dramatically by orchestrating a transformation in the status of women from Other to Self. Female human beings are increasingly acknowledged alongside male human beings as the normative standard by which human rights are developed. The arena of women's human rights therefore does address the modern woman's "peculiar problems for an independent human individual" that de Beauvoir posed (682).

I would like to suggest that international law can function in society as mythology has functioned, proclaiming a moral order, but in this case through secular humanist values cherished as sacred ones. Perhaps in time, upholding this moral order will make possible the transformation of women's status to human beings a customary practice through international legal documents. The women's human rights movement has the potential to reach new levels of emancipation with this self-evident but profound truth that the rights of women are the rights of human beings—an insight that Simone de Beauvoir held 50 years ago.

Notes

¹ De Beauvoir brought an American slant to the idea of "otherness" through the influence of her American lover of 15 years, Nelson Algren, who suggested that she look at the position of women as analogous to the condition of African American men in segregated America. Later, through her friendship with writer Richard Wright and his white wife, Ellen, she was convinced that "white men had succeeded in relegating both black men and all women" to positions of otherness (Baire xii).

² First Wave feminism in the 1920s grew out of the late-19th-century women's rights movement and the involvement of 19th-century suffragists with philanthropy. First Wave feminists such as Olive Schreiner, Virginia Woolf and Rebecca West emphasized the importance of women's material independence from men, women's employment and shared domestic responsibilities. The "woman citizen" is generally the object of discussion, and writers of the time emphasized a "woman's point of view." Second Wave feminism takes as its starting point the politics of reproduction, examining the power of reproduction and reproductive technologies. Writers such as Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone, Audre Lorde and Andrea Dworkin are associated with this Second Wave, though legal, economic and political rights are still important, as they were to First Wave feminists (Hum).

³ Part of the book's controversy revolved around the condemnation that de Beauvoir "blamed" women for their predicament. This, in combination with her nonchalant approach toward her own self-promotion led critics to accuse her of misogyny. Interviews with de Beauvoir throughout her life reveal that she neither blamed nor hated women but was a staunch advocate for women's rights globally. As I imply in my opening remarks about de Beauvoir's own self-depreciation, a more complex polemic might examine how the hegemony of patriarchy finds its way into the consciousness of even its most vigorous resisters.

⁴ In January 1999, the 50th anniversary of the publication of *The Second Sex*, the French sociologist and de Beauvoir scholar Christine Delphy and feminist film critic Sylvie Chaperon organized an international conference in Paris with the explicit aim of bringing de Beauvoir into the center of scholarly and intellectual discourse in France. The highly publicized event was funded by The Culture Ministry, which, according to

Chaperon, "finally came up with some money, but at first we were treated with contempt. . . . Someone—I won't say who—said, 'Who cares about de Beauvoir?'" (Chaperon, qtd. in *The New York Times* in "The World Reintroduces de Beauvoir to the French," 1/30/99). This article was first presented in a shorter form as a paper at that conference, where the organizers provided a detailed overview of the enormous difficulty they faced in convincing French funding sources of the relevancy of the conference to French intellectual concerns.

⁵ As a graduate student in anthropology, I left the University of Arizona in 1991, since my interest in Feminist Anthropology was not regarded at that time as a legitimate subdiscipline. Soon after I left, the department hired a feminist anthropologist. At the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where I continued my training, Feminist Anthropology was embraced; however, there was no acknowledgement of the influence of Simone de Beauvoir in a class I took on the history of Feminist Anthropology. This history began in 1974, without any historical precursors.

⁶ This is especially the case within American anthropology, where scholars have regarded universals not only with discomfort but, on occasion, as morally indefensible. In fact, universals have been so minimized that "the observation that something *doesn't* occur among the Bongo Bongo count[s] as a major contribution to ethnographic knowledge" (Erasmus, qtd. in Brown 1). (The "Bongo Bongo" is anthropology's colonial rendition of the generic tribe.)

⁷ Another line of analysis could legitimately argue that this caution was also a form of sexism. The insights of Anthropology of Women scholars were not regarded as significant enough to integrate into the mainstream of anthropology. The male bias they uncovered was also regarded as an extension of their own bias: Their effort to place gender in the center of cultural analysis was viewed as a set of politically charged interests rather than a fact of human existence. That is, gender, as a category of analysis, was not regarded as central to the formation of culture, as are economy, politics, kinship structure, religion, environment and other conventional anthropological frameworks.

⁸ Just as the Anthropology of Women scholars drew on Simone de Beauvoir, she in turn relied heavily on much of the same ethnographic

data that they later criticized as androcentric. This is one of the ironies of the work of the Anthropology of Women scholars. They employed data to support their views, which they also criticized for the methodology and theoretical slant it contained. They did draw substantially from Margaret Mead's work, which while problematic on certain levels cannot be accused of androcentrism. De Beauvoir, however, seems to have overlooked Mead, who, prior to de Beauvoir, saw "sex" as a problematic category whose meaning is not immediately given in the world. Her study *Coming of Age in Samoa*, first published in 1928, explored young girls' experience of adolescence in order to demonstrate that adolescence is not universally experienced as a time of "storm and stress" but is shaped by culture, which in turn shapes the way boys and girls undergo adolescence. Although Mead's ethnographic data has been heavily criticized, she nonetheless raised the question of the cultural construction of sex.

⁹ We see examples of this kind of thinking every day. For instance, in March 2000, when the Vermont legislature heard citizen responses to the State Supreme Court's ruling that the rights and benefits of marriage should extend to gay couples, the testimony *against* the ruling came from the religious right, arguing that the court had broken God's law as written in the Bible, that domestic partnership is a heterosexual arrangement. Protesters fear that the ruling will bring on the collapse of society. In this instance, the Bible is the mythological text proclaiming the moral order. It serves very much the same function in preserving social stratification as those mythological texts that support the subordination of women.

¹⁰ In the 1980s, feminist anthropologists argued that menstrual taboos do not always indicate that women represent dangerous anomalies and their menstrual blood is not always regarded as a form of ritual pollution that threatens the survival of the group. Instead, danger can also imply power. There is evidence to suggest that early accounts often misread the meaning of taboos associated with menses, attributing pollution rather than power (Bonvillain).

¹¹ Alice Walker first used the term "womanist" as a way of distinguishing a form of feminism that recognized how race intersected with gender to shape the experiences African American women had with sexism. The dominant liberal feminism ignored race as a category of analysis and therefore was not universally meaningful to women of color.

¹² As Kate Soper further states, "An opposition . . . between the natural and the human has been axiomatic to Western thought, and remains a presupposition of all its philosophical, scientific, moral and aesthetic discourse, even if the history of these discourses is in large part a history of the differing constructions we are asked to place upon it" (e.g., the ideas of Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Heidegger). There has also been a tradition of monism—that is, the idea that no absolute duality exists between nature and culture, as expressed, for instance, by Noam Chomsky. Chomsky's view that the differences between other animals and us are differences of degree is an idea formulated in direct response to the body of dualistic theory (Soper 37–56).

¹³ In recent years, anthropologists and others have discussed the prevalence of individuals born with ambiguous sex characteristics. In the United States, as well as in other industrialized countries, intersexed individuals are typically operated on at birth to make them into one or the other sex. However, in societies without these technological capabilities, intersexed individuals are more prevalent and are afforded particular social roles (some that are highly valued, others that are not). Operations in the U.S. do not address other forms of sexual ambiguity that develop with the onset of puberty. Some figures estimate that one to two percent of the world's population is born with or develops ambiguous sex characteristics (see *Lingua Franca*, April 1999).

¹⁴ Following Charlesworth, I use the term "women's human rights" to refer both to women-specific rights such as the right to reproductive freedoms and to general human rights norms, applied to women (Charlesworth 77 n.4).

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DINNER AT A COUNTRY HOUSE

BY MARY KENNAN HERBERT

Their porch is large, commodious and screened.
Mosquitoes are not invited. The table there is inviting,
with a cornucopia of salads, three red wines, two homemade
pies with local apples, crafted with panache by our hostess.
Breads, too, from a favorite bakery within easy driving distance.
After all, this is not manna in the wilderness, but a civilized
rural retreat. Outside, young girls sit on the old swing,
sizing up the adult guests. A baby is brought in to be admired,
a twentysomething mom puts him proudly on display.
There's the baby; where is the dog? This scene requires
a big Lab to welcome us, doesn't it? Voices are babbling
like the newly dammed brook beyond the freshly mowed lawn,
the brook is now a swimming pool. Our host cut the grass
this very morning in anticipation of our gathering, our smiles.
At 8:30 the evening light is still adequate for an after-dinner
stroll. Guests are discussing gardens, trust funds, career
changes, the motivations of architects and accountants,
how to communicate with architects of country houses,
movies about country houses, babies, divorce, dying
and driving. The price of gasoline. Mosquitoes pound
on the screen, demanding attention. One bug sneaks in,
ignores the wine, zeroes in on one guest's throat. A large welt
grows on her sunburned neck, a souvenir like the heavy moon
or the napkin wadded in her clenched fist. In the kitchen,
beyond the merry porch, coffee is offered. It is perfect.
Outside, crickets laugh on cue. She cannot swallow.

Two Poems

BY BEN JACQUES

THE LAST BOAT

Hull shape
ash leaf on the water
cupped hands
a folded letter
whatever you use for design
let it be a simple boat
open to the stars and wind
keel of oak
lapstrake of cedar
because this will be the last boat
the last pushing off from shore
past the red and black channel markers
into the swells rising at the breakwater
clang of bell buoy at the ledge
beyond the sound

When the cape light grows distant
and there's only time to kill
roll up your slicker for a pillow
take a little nap
before the storm

THE MILKMAN

At the dairy by four,
he'd ice the truck, then load
milk, cream, cottage cheese.

On Saturdays he'd light the stove
for a customer in East Dearing,
drive to Town Landing to load milk
for the hotel on Chebeague Island,
then finish the Foreside and head inland.

He remembers snowdrifts,
snowshoeing over a parked car
to get to the door.

And the surprise he got in a dark hallway
in a three-decker in Portland,
reaching down to pick up glass empties,
his hand settling on a drunk's face.

At one house the woman kept
hassling him over the bill, then
she'd make him wait while she
counted out pennies from a jar.
He said: "I've half a mind
to pay you five dollars
to buy your milk elsewhere."

"I'll take it," she snapped.

Life is short, he figured,
as beside the scattered coins
he set down a clean five.

Two Poems

BY PETER FILKINS

BOTTLE

Sentinel to the air
caught up in it,
an inner atmosphere
that can intuit

Everywhere
empty of limit
outside its clear-
eyed silicate.

Hence the fear
of stone or bullet,
riotous cheer
making it rocket.

Rather, what's here
is indeterminate.
Take it (*beware!*),
then drink from it.

TO A SUICIDE

How severely you misjudged us. Though we're shaken,
our sorrow finds us here in expectation
of the cold hard truth untrue, the music mistaken,
this perplexed and heavy air a mock occasion.

Yet feeling what we feel, there's only this:
to join the solemn line that waits on you,
sign our names, bow heads together, kiss,
comparing notes with talk of what we knew,

what we did not, or what we might have said
to convince you, finally, that life's allotted pain
is unbearable and assured, its pleasures nothing
more than opiates, temporal as the rain,
and like the rose's pliant petals—fleeting
yet incarnadine, and wasted on the dead.

Fledge

BY CYNTHIA RICHARDSON

I am in a crown of twigs
And thorns woven on a ledge.
The neighbors only leave
At night, come back at dawn,
Sing a different song from mine,
Scratch and scritch in their
Dark smelly place all day.

Her nearing rush of wings
Brings pleasure.
Her parting rush of wings
Brings pain.
I am hunger, she is food.

Soon I seek the ledge,
Claws slip on painted edge.
But when I start to fall,
I don't seem to fall at all.
Forces lift me to a sill,
Heart beating to break.

What did I feel as I fell?
What was that force?
I fall again to see.
And when I float,
I don't go back,
I don't look back.
Her scream is at
My back.

Gardens, Tea, and Sympathy

BY ANDREW HOWITT

Early contacts between Europe and China produced wonderful opportunities for cultural exchanges, but they also resulted in distorted notions, unreliable accounts and incorrect assumptions about alien societies. Nowhere is the resulting confusion more evident or more amusing than in the exaggerations and misuse of landscape design brought back to Europe from China.

The majority of 17th- and 18th-century English and Continental landscape gardeners failed to appreciate the principles underlying the creation of their imported Chinese garden features. Because Europeans misunderstood the cultural foundation of Chinese gardens, they constructed anomalies that please us today more for their comical failure than for their success in grafting Asian spirit onto European soil.

To be fair, one must note that Chinese perception of nature included factors that Western gardeners in the pre-Romantic period did not consider appropriate. For example, Chinese landscape architects could anticipate and therefore utilize specific philosophical and emotional responses to their gardens through meditation. Contemplation in "a garden suffused with the doctrines of Taoism and Buddhism" would lead to an awareness of how much one was in harmony with nature (Engel 27). The Chinese viewed the relationship between man and

nature more like the 19th-century European romantics than like the rationalists of the Age of Reason.

English and Continentals attempted to improve nature, bringing natural areas into line with prevailing horticultural tastes. Robert Bly refers to such European pride in human reason as the Old Position, describing its divisive reasoning since the time of Descartes in this way: "Consciousness is human, and involves reason. A serious gap exists between us and the rest of nature. Nature is to be watched, pitied, and taken care of if it behaves" (8).

For the Chinese, a garden was not to be tamed or pitied; it was "an expression of the ideal accord of man and nature. . . . Inside the house, man is Confucian: formal, dutiful, restrained, inhibited. Outside, in the garden, he is Taoist: carefree, newborn, primitivistic, romantic. There, man and nature become one" (Engel 8).

Upon entering a garden, a Chinese visitor would begin a process of philosophical reflection, directed by auditory stimuli, such as raindrops striking banana-tree leaves or the songs of caged birds, and visual forms—rather than color and scent. As Chen Congzhou, a professor at Tongji University in China, has written, "A garden without water, clouds, shadows, sounds, morning twilight and sunset is a garden devoid of natural beauty. For these, though ethereal, set off the actual scenes of a garden" (51).

A Chinese scholar was expected to bring to the paths, pavilions and pond banks knowledge of poetry, philosophy and history, as well as aesthetics. According to Professor Chen, "The scenery becomes lively when it is inspired with sentiments, and sentiments find their source in human beings" (13).

The names for various sections of Wang Chin Tsz's garden, built in 1550, clearly reflect the cultural expectation that a visitor would spiritually respond to a garden. "The Place of Clear Meditation, the Elevation of Remote Thought . . . and the Place for Listening to the Sighing Pines" were typical phrases used in the tradition of inscribing inspirational titles on rocks or on placards hung on the lintels of pavilions (Thacker 51).

Chinese gardens encouraged one's imagination to follow a meditative channel (Impey 140). Two of the most popular stimuli for the Chinese imagination were not flowers and statues, as in the West, but rocks and trees, selected for their unusual, twisted, contorted, disfigured and weathered shapes. According to Christopher Thacker, "To the Chinese, the writhen, contorted appearance of . . . old and almost lifeless trunks is worthy of lengthy contemplation, revealing qualities of fortitude and

grandeur comparable to the worn yet enduring stones of the mountainside" (44). Translating contorted shapes into moral qualities like fortitude was one desirable result of the meditative process. Sensitive viewers could also experience the infinite within the confines of a limited space, seeing the large in the small.

While Dutch gardeners were spending fortunes on tulip bulbs, the Chinese invested huge sums to acquire the famous and fantastically shaped rocks dredged from Lake Tai Hu near Shanghai. These rocks are still prized for resembling now smoke, now dragons, now mountains and now clouds. With tea and contemplation, along with, perhaps, some opium supplied by British merchants, Chinese mandarins could feel they had visited mountains while contemplating rocks in their backyard.

Yuan Yeh wrote in his garden treatise of 1634, "A single mountain may give rise to many effects, a small stone may evoke many feelings. . . . If one can find stillness in the middle of the city turmoil, why should one then forgo such an easily accessible spot and seek a more distant one?" (qtd. in Impey 140).

To aid the visitor traveling down the Chinese contemplative path, pavilions and covered walkways with balconies were erected. Here, mandarins drank tea, meditated and composed poetry—an aesthetic relative of philosophy. To the intelligentsia, poetry was as inextricable from gardens as fragrance and color are for westerners. Thacker notes that "for the Chinese, a garden without poetry would seem somehow incomplete." In what sounds like a translation of a Chinese proverb, he adds, "No garden, no landscape, without poems and poets" (51). Chen states much the same idea as "No balcony, no figures; no figures, no sentiments; no sentiments, no scenery" (13).

Poets were sometimes invited to gather on the bank of a stream in a private park to recite spontaneous verse for the length of time it took a cup of wine to float downstream from the host to the poetic guest (Thacker 53). In Beijing, one emperor had a small artificial stream built so that he could organize such parties without leaving the Forbidden City.

The Chinese garden, then, with its physical stimuli and aesthetic and philosophical input, was conceived as "a symbolic representation, an essence, an indication, rather than an attempt at realistic re-creation" (Thacker 43). Alan Watts notes a similar purpose in Japanese gardens: "The intention of the best Japanese gardens is not to make a realistic illusion of landscape, but simply to suggest the general atmosphere of 'mountain and water' in a small space, so

arranging the design of the garden that it seems to have been helped rather than governed by the hand of man" (194). The means of creating this essence were trees, rocks, waterways and poems—not flower beds, clipped hedges, wrought-iron gates or bronze fountains.

In his *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, the sympathetic Sir William Chambers (1726–1796), who visited China for a firsthand look and came away a kindred spirit, notes this confluence of influences on Chinese garden construction: "Their gardeners are not only botanists but also painters and philosophers, having a thorough knowledge of the human mind and the arts by which its strongest feelings are excited. . ." (qtd. in Hadfield 220).

Mown lawns, mulched flower beds, topiaries, hedges, straight gravel paths and spraying fountains—all features that clearly owe their existence to a gardener's heavy hand—were undesirable intrusions between a meditating mandarin and nature.

Sir William Temple disparagingly pointed out this contrast in landscape design techniques when in 1685 he claimed, with hubris, superiority for British gardens: "Our British gardens on the contrary, instead of humoring nature, love to deviate from it as much as possible. Our trees rise in cones, globes and pyramids. We see the marks of the scissors upon every plant and bush" (qtd. in Hadfield 178).

The main point here is that in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was the Chinese—not the British and Continental—gardeners who contrived scenes that inspired spiritual/aesthetic quests toward integrating man and nature, establishing both as equally important, neither superior to nor improved by the other.

Admittedly, Chinese landscapes were artificial in that they were constructed, but the interaction of man and nature in these environments was intended to be a re-creation of a natural experience, not a cerebral or purely aesthetic one. Alan Watts describes the conscious intention here in this way: "The Zen gardener has no mind to impose his own intention upon natural forms, but is careful rather to follow the 'intentionless intention' of the forms themselves, even though this involves the utmost care and skill. In fact, the gardener never ceases to prune, clip, weed and train his plants, but he does so in the spirit of being part of the garden himself rather than a directing agent standing outside. He is not interfering with nature because he is nature, and he cultivates as if not cultivating. Thus the garden is at once highly artificial and extremely natural" (194)!

Temple observed a related difference between the 17th- and 18th-

century English and the Chinese: their disinclination to count or to achieve uniformity. "Among us [English]," Temple writes, "the beauty of buildings and planting is placed chiefly in some certain proportions, symmetries or uniformities; our walks and trees are arranged so as to answer one another, and at exact distances. The Chinese scorn this way of planting and say that any boy that can tell [i.e., count] a hundred may plant walks of trees in straight lines, over-against one another, and to what length and extent he pleases" (qtd. in Hadfield 176). Walking through a formal 17th- or 18th-century English/Continental garden, a visitor could hardly resist the temptation to count the hollow globes or the orange trees in tubs, as if puzzling out an elaborate three-dimensional mathematical puzzle.

Bly points out that "the 18th-century [European] attitude represents the culmination of a slow retreat from the open channels to nature taught by the [Eleusinian] Mysteries and by the ancient world in general. And in the 18th century there is a general disdaining of nature" (10).

Temple and his followers erred when they reasoned that because Chinese gardens lacked symmetry, they were thereby without underlying principles. His description of Chinese gardens as "without any order or disposition of parts that shall be commonly or easily observed" is woefully incorrect (qtd. in Hadfield 177). Instead of transposing reason into columns, rows, mazes and figurines, the Chinese expressed the spiritual by giving form everywhere to the dialectics of complementary forces.

Chinese gardeners utilize complementary relationships, such as high and low, far and near, wet and dry, smooth and rough, dark and light, in-motion (strolling) and in-position (sitting) garden viewing, and "borrowing" scenes and "separating" scenes, i.e., letting in surrounding landscape features or walling out neighboring cityscape elements. The essential principle at work comprises the yin-yang duality, the balance or harmony between opposing forces.

Not until the latter half of the 18th century did first the English and soon after the Continental garden designers develop a looser, more natural and flowing style. Capability Brown (1716–1783), who introduced small groves, serpentine lakes and rising and falling driveway approaches to create a variable but controlled sense of distance, was the best of the new school of landscape architects to design parks and gardens more empathic to nature. Continental critics acknowledged the British debt to China when they coined the term *jardins anglo-chinois* to describe

these newly fashionable, early-romantic, asymmetrical spaces.

As David Engel notes, "Even where the parts of the [Chinese] design show neither reason nor formula, there is neither disorder nor confusion. . . . The contradictions within a Chinese garden are more apparent than real. . . . The impact of each garden feature is enhanced by studied consideration of its contrast with its background and the relationship between dominant and subordinate elements within each scene. . . . There is constant play between denseness and sparseness, openness and walling-in of space, the refined craftsmanship of exquisite architectural details and the natural trees and rocks, and between the bright and the dark" (51).

Without an understanding of the designer's aims and means to achieve them in a Chinese garden, early European visitors to China found the gardens wild and disordered. French Jesuits were especially unsuited to appreciate Chinese culture, arriving as they did to convert and teach, not to learn. Père Louis LeComte, for example, said of Chinese architecture in 1690 that it was "very unpleasing to foreigners, and must needs offend anyone that has the least notion of true architecture" (qtd. in Impey 143).

Fortunately, European derision soon evolved into enjoyment, if not true appreciation, of Chinese architecture of buildings and gardens. Depictions that were more favorable than LeComte's reports eventually appeared on plates, cloth, furniture and canvas.

The Europeans wanted exotic imports for amusement rather than to acknowledge the attainments of another culture. Oliver Impey notes that "people knew exactly what they wanted a 'Chinese' building to be, light, frivolous, immediately pretty, and gaily colored, and they had no use for Sir William Chambers' solemn pronouncements on inaccuracy. If a building had Chinese fret or a conical or concave roof, if it had upturned eaves and was hung with bells, it was Chinese (or Indian, as you liked) and bother Sir William" (qtd. in Impey 146).

In France, Louis XIV contributed to the developing Continental tradition of mistaken chinoiserie with the construction of the Trianon de Porcelain in 1670. Because Chinese buildings appeared to be blue and white, as they were depicted on porcelain plates, the Sun King had his Trianon covered with blue-and-white faience. Of course, the building had to be dismantled only a few years after its construction because the facade could not endure the French climate.

In the 18th century, garden pavilions, a traditional and integral feature of Chinese gardens, began to be popular in Europe. As Impey notes, however, "Once the fashion began, every conceivable and even almost inconceivable

style of architecture was used, from classical to chinoiserie to 'Hindoo'" (141).

For a long time, chinoiserie pavilions—or follies—substituted surface decoration in an inaccurate Chinese style for the real thing. A splendid example of European ignorance and the resulting Eurocentrism is a statue of a Chinese musician at the Chinese House at Sans Souci in Potsdam, built for Frederick the Great in the 1750s. The statue depicts a Chinese musician holding a *gu-qing*, or Chinese zither, like a lute, when, in fact, a *gu-qing* is laid flat on a table and plucked with both hands held above it.

In England, Georgian chinoiserie can still be found in several places, including the House of Confucius at Kew Gardens, designed by J. Goupy around 1745; a "Chinese house painted by Mr. Slauter" at Stowe in 1745; a garden pavilion at Shugborough Park, Staffordshire, built around 1747; and the Great Pagoda at Kew by Sir William Chambers, built in 1763 (Impey 149). In the Brighton Pavilion, designed by several architects, including John Nash, one still sees typically inaccurate chinoiserie inventions that emphasize the bizarre and exotic. Queen Victoria so hated the building that she sold her Uncle George IV's creation as soon as she had the power.

Gone, but captured in an engraving of 1753 by Canaletto, is the chinoiserie bridge at Hampton Court, which made overly extensive use of fret that had been popularized in furniture by Thomas Chippendale (Impey 152). Fireworks—another Chinese invention—destroyed a pagoda built by Nash in St. James Park in 1814.

Chinese garden features were employed by European landscape and building architects primarily to amuse and bewilder the European public, who must have gawked, gaped and guffawed. However, by the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, increased contacts with China enabled European landscape architects to appreciate and emulate Chinese gardening creativity. Much like the mid-19th-century influx of Japanese woodblock prints and their subsequent pervasive influence on European aesthetics, growing 17th- and 18th-century trade and diplomatic relations between Europe and China eventually resulted in a cross-pollination of horticultural achievements that landscape architects still benefit from today.

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Book Review

Exploring Consciousness

The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness by Antonio Damasio. Harcourt Brace, 1999

Some Deaths Before Dying by Peter Dickinson. Mysterious Press—Warner Books, 1999

BY MEERA TAMAYA

By a serendipitous coincidence, I read two books consecutively that turned out to be about the same topic—the workings of human consciousness. The first, *The Feeling of What Happens*, by Antonio Damasio, the M. W. Van Allen Distinguished Professor and head of the Department of Neurology at the University of Iowa School of Medicine, examines the intricate ways in which body, mind and emotions orchestrate our consciousness. The second, *Some Deaths Before Dying*, a mystery novel (low on the canonical totem pole), by Peter Dickinson, also deals with consciousness, but of a fictional character, Rachel Matson, a 90-year-old talented photographer and widow of a World War II hero, paralyzed from the neck down from a degenerative disease, who is determined to hold on to her consciousness till her body finally gives out.

The title of Damasio's book, *The Feeling of What Happens*, is an adaptation from Seamus Heaney's poem "Song," which ends with the line

"when the bird sings very close to the music of what happens." The title is but one indication of the range of references, from poetry to pop culture, used effortlessly, which makes Damasio's book a joy to read. Indeed, with his lucid, jargon-free prose, Damasio joins the ranks of those rare scientists, like Stephen J. Gould, who make science accessible to the general reader in prose that is a pleasure in its own right.

In his previous book, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, building on the seminal insights of Charles Darwin and William James, citing scientific evidence based on his case studies of brain-damaged patients, Damasio makes a persuasive case for the centrality of emotion in biological survival, citing evidence that absence of emotion can be just as damaging as excessive emotion. Damasio dismantles the tired old dualisms between mind and body, reason and emotion, a legacy of the Platonic and Judaeo-Christian tradition, most influentially articulated by Descartes in the 17th century. Indeed, his credo may be summed up as "I feel, therefore I am," in direct opposition to the famous Cartesian formula, "I think, therefore I am."

All of this comes as a great relief to me (a woman born and raised in India), as traditionally feeling and emotion have always been considered the province of women, the lower classes and colonized subjects. In literature and movies, for example, the Irish, the Welsh and people of color, along with women, are given to emotional displays, while the ruling elite go about their business of conquest and subjugation with a stiff upper lip. Why cry, when you can shoot from the hip and make your day, as Dirty Harry/Clint Eastwood would have it?

In his second book, Damasio takes on the subject of consciousness, which according to him "is the turning point in our evolutionary history." Again, citing empirical evidence made possible by recent technological developments in brain scanning, such as PET (positron-emission tomography) and MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and study of brain-damaged patients with a range of impairments from agnosia to Alzheimer's disease, Damasio portrays the complex connections between sensory experience, emotions and human consciousness. His aim is to map the biology of consciousness.

In the past decade, termed "The Decade of the Brain," a spate of books on consciousness, or the mind-body problem, have rolled off the press. Philosophers and neuroscientists—Daniel Dennet, Paul and Patricia Churchland, Thomas Nagel, Colin McGinn, John Searle, Gerald Edelman and Francis Crick, to name a few—have pondered the origins and the nature of human consciousness. According to Damasio, it is

consciousness that has made possible “conscience, religion, social and political organizations, the arts, the sciences and technology” (4). The question of consciousness has acquired greater urgency since the digital revolution has raised, once again, the possibility of computer duplication of the human brain. The specter of AI, or artificial intelligence, threatens to complete the dethronement of man begun by Copernicus and Galileo and hastened forward by Darwin. The new millennium may see the microchip, not the human mind, as the center of the known and unknown universe. In this bleak scenario of virtual humanity and reality, the unaccountable factor still remains human consciousness, and what makes it unaccountable is human feeling (three cheers for unaccountability and human feeling, say I). To the question of whether human consciousness can be duplicated by a microchip, Damasio answers that “feeling is, in effect, the barrier, because . . . feeling cannot be duplicated, unless the brain’s actions on the flesh are duplicated, unless the brain’s sensing of the flesh after it has been acted on by the brain is duplicated” (314–15).

That sums up the originality of Damasio’s contribution to the rapidly burgeoning field of mind, brain and consciousness studies: Not only is there no homunculus (the secular equivalent of the religious concept of soul), which may be the locus of consciousness, but the whole—the body, the senses, the brain, emotion and feelings—forms an intricate fugue of awareness of the self in relation to the world that we experience as consciousness. How the sense of self arises as a relation of one’s core consciousness to the world, the development of an extended consciousness built on memory, the distinction between emotion and feeling, all these are some of the offshoots of Damasio’s central insight into the nature of consciousness as an amalgam of sensory experiences, emotions and cognition.

Rachel Matson, the protagonist of Peter Dickinson’s novel *Some Deaths Before Dying*, is determined to fine-tune her consciousness even as her body is dying; she watches the rooks building nests outside her window and wonders how they are made:

No, “wonder” was too feeble a word for the serious effort and attention she put into it, a tactic in her long and steadfast campaign to keep hold of her mind. Almost everything else was gone, the provinces of her body lost for good. . . . But until then the mind was hers, untouchable, holy to her, *hagia sophia*. She was determined to die knowing what was happening to

her, and aware and confident of the reality of anything in the field of her remaining perceptions. (2-3)

Rachel is handed a mystery to solve when her daughter tells her that one of a pair of antique pistols, made by the famous Swiss gun maker Ladurie, for Joachim Murat, one of Napoleon's generals, a gift from Rachel to her late husband, has turned up on the television *Antiques Roadshow*, displayed by a total stranger. And what is worse, the pistol has been damaged by the corrosive effects of the powder that wasn't cleaned after it was fired. Who has fired it and in what deadly circumstances is a mystery Rachel sets out to solve from her bed, recalling fugitive memories with the aid of the extensive collections of photographs she has taken, and by asking whispered questions to a series of visitors she summons to her bed with the authority of the dying.

The mystery is composed of all the tired and true elements of the Golden Age mysteries: the Agatha Christie world of upper-class Brits fighting wars on global and domestic fronts, ostensibly to uphold notions of "honor" they have been socialized to maintain, or preserve the facade thereof. Rachel's consciousness has to grapple with the fact that in reality, these codes of honor, functional in battlefields (risking one's life to save the life of an underling, for example), turn into a self-serving mechanism to preserve the status quo of the class structure.

In this system, running a camp for juvenile delinquents means the toffs who put up a jolly good show of altruism are, in reality, abusing the boys sexually. When the most privileged of all the toffs is about to decamp with the funds after assiduously pimping for the local lords of the manor, the miscreant must be punished—not, however, by the due process of law, like ordinary blokes, but by his fellow nobs, in a farce of a duel where the actual private execution is carried out by their lowly sergeants. The sexual exploitation of the delinquents is the prerogative of the officer class, and it is not of great concern as long as it is hidden. It is exposure and the threat of a public scandal that sends the officers scurrying to clean up their acts, and guess who shovels the dirt, and enthusiastically, too? It is the thoroughly indoctrinated servants.

Rachel makes a last painful effort of consciousness to reconstruct the dark secrets so long covered up in order to maintain her upper-class image of herself. Before dying, she becomes fully conscious and sees in a way she hasn't, even at the height of her powers as a photographer: "Perhaps she had been blind. . . . Her blindness had been of her own making. It was as if she had all along been trying to build the nest on

the wrong bough" (232). Though she is physically immobilized, Rachel's quest for the truth buried in her past, her efforts to rend the veils of willed ignorance that had cocooned her in life, her determination "to die knowing," a quest as old as that of Oedipus, is what distinguishes the human animal, for better or worse.

As Antonio Damasio asks, "What could be more difficult to know than to know how we know?" Rachel's efforts to disinter the past, however painful it may prove, is finally her last attempt to die with a clear sense of self and its relation to the world. Damasio articulates his objective in writing *The Feeling of What Happens* in similar terms: "I write about the sense of self and about the transition from innocence and ignorance to knowingness and selfness. My specific goal is to consider the biological circumstances that permit that critical transition" (3-4).

What a treat to read about the science of consciousness first thing in the morning, and end the day with a work of fiction that fleshes out scientific hypotheses with an empathic imagination and a novelist's way with words. In 1959, C. P. Snow issued a jeremiad titled *Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, in which he prophesied an increasing and possibly unbridgeable gulf between scientists and artists. The two are locked in mutual incomprehension, Snow proclaimed, because they speak different languages. If he were alive today, I think he would be agreeably surprised at the number of scientists who write like novelists, and novelists who give a human face to scientific abstractions.

Review Essay

The Noble Savage in Chinese Film: *Ethnic and Gendered Dimensions*

BY SUMI COLLIGAN

A basic tenet of anthropological wisdom is that we develop consciousness of ourselves as individuals and as members of groups by comparing ourselves with others. Film offers one venue for such a mirroring process. One strategy of contemporary Chinese filmmakers has been to concentrate their scripts in remote and sparsely populated areas of China. In so doing, they are chronicling tales located peripherally in space in order to reflect critically upon issues of concern to Han (the majority ethnic group in the People's Republic of China) at the "center" (those granted authority and/or importance) of Chinese society (Gladney 168). While some of these films may appear to have an ethnographic flavor, their primary purpose is to deploy portrayals of the "other" that serve as a backdrop for exploring the benefits and ills of Chinese-style modernity.

In this essay I examine representations of ethnicity and gender in a film called *Xiu Xiu: the Sent-Down Girl* (1999). These representations of-

fer a useful vehicle for analyzing the self/other dynamic outlined above. This film is directed by Joan Chen and is based upon a short story entitled "The Celestial Bath" written by Geling Yan. Both director and author are Shanghai born and now reside in San Francisco. Although the film and the narrative were composed on Western soil, they incorporate many of the same themes and conventions as those that have preoccupied China's Fifth Generation filmmakers (filmmakers trained by the Beijing Academy in the post-Maoist era).

This film is set on the Tibetan plains during the latter part of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and recounts the tale of an adolescent girl from Chengdu, Wen Xiu, who, along with many others of her generation, is sent to the countryside to learn from the peasants. After a short stint at a powdered-milk factory, she becomes apprenticed to a solitary Tibetan horse trainer, Lao Jin, ostensibly in order to prepare for competition against the famous Girls' Iron Cavalry, only to discover at the termination of her training that the Cavalry has long since disbanded and her chances of returning home are nil. Through the narration of this plot, the film touches upon motifs of contemporary political corruption and sexual exploitation in contradistinction to images of the noble savage and the honesty and simplicity of rural life.

Whereas the story is not directly autobiographical, the author, Geling Yan, who also helped compose the film script, did perform in dance troupes as a member of the People's Liberation Army in her youth (Yan 183). As this case illustrates, the historical focus of the film, the Cultural Revolution, has become a popular punching bag for Chinese artists and intellectuals, who have bemoaned their fate during "the ten lost years." For example, numerous Chinese films produced in the '80s, such as *The Blue Kite* and *Farewell, My Concubine*, addressed this topic.

William Hinton, a historian of socialism, explains the overarching significance of this period:

In 1956, what was socialist in China consisted primarily of a radically new system of public and cooperative ownership, without an adequate supporting complex of new ideology, culture, or institutions to bind it together. In the long run Mao held, only by carrying the revolution to the superstructure, only by transforming old ideas, customs, culture, and habits; only by remolding education, art, literature, and, above all, government, could a new social fabric in harmony with and supportive of the new socialist economic base be brought into being. (760)

The Cultural Revolution was supposed to mark this final transformation, shaking up entrenched elites and world views, and China's young people were called up to participate fully in this process. What ensued instead was a society thrown into turmoil by factionalism, denunciations and rigidly imposed political dogma (Hinton 760–66). Moreover, while girls probably experienced greater geographic mobility than in previous periods of Chinese history, they also became more vulnerable to sexual abuse due to the absence of familial protection (Honig 4).

The subject of the Cultural Revolution is introduced in the film by summarizing, via written text, some of its goals and the role of youth in carrying them out. In the opening scene, we see young people engaging in group exercise and young people in military uniform saying their farewells to their families. Xiu Xiu (Wen Xiu's nickname) describes her own motives in these words: "Everyone is signing up, so I signed up, too!" Here the uncritical acceptance and momentum of mass movements is emphasized along with the initial innocence of its followers. Xiu Xiu's innocence, in particular, is revealed through the parental attention she receives, as well as through the adolescent courtship of a suitor who presents her with a kaleidoscope as a remembrance. Xiu Xiu's fate is, in fact, retold by this suitor, who never crosses her path again but is able to piece it together from the reports of others. The suitor himself stays behind because of family connections and this is our first hint that Chinese-style socialism has not produced an equal playing field. The benefits of social networks also arise toward the end of the film, when Xiu Xiu is informed that those youngsters with political clout or financial advantage have been allowed to abandon their posts and return to urban living.

The uniforms themselves raise another contradiction between Maoist ideology and the lived experiences of this era. During the Cultural Revolution, females were told that "women hold up half the sky." This aphorism masked the social reality of gender difference by encouraging an outward facade of androgyny. Moreover, those who challenged its validity risked being labeled selfish and counterrevolutionary (Honig 4). In the film, this contradiction is exposed initially when the sent-down girls are pinched on the buttocks by Party officials as they watch a propaganda clip on a screen set up at night in the outdoors. Indeed, there is an implication that Xiu Xiu may have been transferred from her factory job to a more isolated assignment with the Tibetan horse trainer as a punishment for resisting this unwelcome fondling. This issue is further magnified when no one comes to relieve Xiu Xiu of her

post and Party bureaucrats take advantage of her desperation to return home by prostituting and raping her.

By contrast, the narrative incorporates the character of the Tibetan, Lao Jin, in such a way as to trifle with Han metaphors of minorities within China. These metaphors (not unlike the metaphors of other "civilizing projects") characterize minorities as feminine, archaic and child-like (Harrell 9–10). Rather blatantly, Lao Jin is introduced as someone who "lost his manhood with one slice of a knife" during a tribal war, thereby posing no threat to Xiu Xiu, though they share the same tent. The ancient quality of this lifestyle is emphasized by underscoring the Tibetan's identification with horses and his resemblance to animals. Finally, his childlike innocence is suggested through Xiu Xiu's taunts that he owns nothing (actually, he owns a transistor radio and when he pulls it out to show her, it is broadcasting the sounds of group exercise, another reminder of the controlled and conformist nature of contemporary Han existence) and knows nothing of the world of residence permits and permanent job assignments (his solution to her abandonment is taking her to a bus stop). Of course, the juxtaposition of the lone Tibetan with the mass movement of the Cultural Revolution (rugged individualist versus group hysteria) is provided in order to expose the hypocrisy of Han Communist constructions of civilization, achievement and masculinity.

Additionally, the theme of purity and pollution runs throughout the film. Before Xiu Xiu leaves Chengdu, her mother reminds her of the importance of rinsing out her menstrual pads so that they do not collect germs. Moreover, we witness her mother giving her a bath and later discover that it is a habit of which Xiu Xiu is unusually fond and makes considerable efforts to maintain under the harsh conditions of the Tibetan grasslands. She is, in fact, horrified by Lao Jin's lack of concern for personal hygiene, a point, again, intended to highlight his near animality and play on dichotomies of the pure Han center and the contaminated periphery. Not surprisingly, as the narrative progresses, and the full corruption of the Cultural Revolution is uncovered, Xiu Xiu is the one who begins to appear unkempt and wild (her own fall from grace is marked, not so subtly, by accepting an apple from a male visitor) while Lao Jin, through his nurturant and protective attention, discloses the depth of his own humanity.

Despite the film's cynical portrayal of Chinese modernity, the possibility of redemption is implied at its closure. Xiu Xiu resumes her adolescent appearance, signaling her desire for Lao Jin to shoot her and put

her out of her misery. His willingness to do so is a display of his own bravery. The implication throughout the film is that Lao Jin's emasculation has made him more fearless because he no longer has to be consumed with guarding his genitals (a preoccupation that has caused Han Communist Party leaders to act with cowardice and deceit). He buries her in a pool that he has devised for her bathing pleasure, shoots himself and rests beside her as vultures fly overhead. The vultures, as in Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Horse Thief*, symbolize the Tibetan funerary ritual, the sky burial and the hope of reincarnation (Gladney 172).

The overarching theme of this review has been to explore ways in which the Han construct images of the noble savage through film as a vehicle for expressing their distaste for the contradictions and evils of repressive regimes. Since attacks on such regimes resonate in the West, especially when the regimes assume the guise of communism, I would like to insert a few caveats into a discussion that might otherwise lend itself to foregone conclusions. First, while I by no means intend to minimize the lives that were damaged and destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, it is also important to note that market reforms that have been introduced in the past two decades have produced uneven results. Rather than offering the panacea promised by many economists, they have generated new sources of insecurity and instability as evidenced by the emergence of floating populations (who migrate from regions where few resources have been invested to regions of high investment, only to find that they are denied the rights granted to permanent residents) and the soaring rate of suicide among rural women. Second, postcolonial theorists have emphasized that moral crisis and disillusionment often follow on the heels of independence movements and revolutions when the beneficiaries discover that their ideals are not so easily realized (due to a host of factors, including the effects of global and regional inequalities, the legacy of colonial thinking and continuities from preindependence and prerevolutionary sources of oppression). Hence, Chinese mainlanders and expatriates are not unique in expressing serious misgivings about the "evolution" of postcolonial structures and processes. Finally, although the image of Tibetan as noble savage is obviously a highly romanticized distortion (and yet another example of "imperialist nostalgia," to use Renato Rosaldo's term [68]), we need only look to our own representations of Native Americans and/or Tibetans to gain awareness of how our own constructions of modernity are brought into sharp relief by our own depictions of the "primitive" and/or the lost world of Shangri-la.

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